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New York

Chairman: Mr. Rowe ..... (Sierra Leone)

The meeting resumed at 10.20 a.m.

The Chairman: Before we proceed to our discussions, I would like to recall that the representative of Uruguay indicated yesterday that the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States had already identified candidates for the Bureau. I think we are still waiting for Bolivia and Jamaica to transmit their official communications to that effect. As soon as we receive those communications, we will go through the process of electing those two officers.

Meanwhile, I would like to announce that I intend to call a meeting of the Bureau some time tomorrow. The time and place will, probably, be determined by the end of this meeting. Whether the Bureau is fully constituted or not, I need to have my colleagues assist me in this process.

There is a saying that little drops of water and little grains of sand make a mighty ocean and a beauteous land. Yesterday we made some progress, probably to the surprise of us all. We should commend ourselves for doing that. In my view, we made a declaration to the effect that the Disarmament Commission is not a dead duck, that it is prepared to fulfil its responsibilities and that it is prepared to make its contribution, however small, to the cause of disarmament and to the maintenance of international peace and security. I therefore appeal to members to keep the momentum going.

Yesterday we agreed that my proposal for the first agenda item, dealing with nuclear weapons, was accepted in principle, or on an *ad referendum* basis. We also agreed that today we would concentrate on my second proposal, relating to conventional disarmament. I would once again like to remind members that, in the interest of progress and cooperation, the reason I made my proposal was due to the fact that I had gathered — not only during the past several weeks, when I was Chairman-designate, but during approximately two years — that there seemed to be no consensus on the various proposals. My job is not only to direct our proceedings, but also to serve as a mediator. My proposal is therefore presented as a proposal from someone who is a mediator. I hope that I will be successful. Success will not only be mine; it will be a success for all of us.

I would now like to begin to hear the views of members on my proposal for the second agenda item. I would like to read out the item again. I hope that delegations have received copies of it, whether by facsimile, e-mail or other means of communication. My proposal for the second agenda item reads as follows: "Practical confidence-building measures, including verification mechanisms, in the field of conventional weapons".

Mr. Bravaco (United States of America): The Disarmament Commission is an important body. It is the think tank of the international community on questions pertaining to disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. It is in that context that we have reviewed the second proposal made by the Chairman. We have some concerns.

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With regard to confidence-building measures, we note that this body dealt with such measures for three years. While that is an important issue, we wonder whether it deserves another three years of focus by the international community and this body.

With regard to verification mechanisms in the context of confidence-building measures, Washington is confused by that formulation because, from our understanding, confidence-building measures are an adjunct to verification mechanisms, not the other way around. Moreover, as we all know as a result of last year's First Committee session, the issue of verification is going to be handled by a group of governmental experts. It therefore seems to us that, with regard to this point, the matter is already going to be addressed.

We wonder whether the Disarmament Commission can do a little bit better, and focus on something that is not being addressed on a broader basis by the entire international community. It is for that reason that yesterday I proposed a substitute for this item. As I understand it, the second Disarmament Commission agenda item does not necessarily have to be focused exclusively on conventional disarmament. That is why the United States has considered a substitute for the item, which I read out to the Commission yesterday. I will read it out again: "Responding to contemporary threats to international peace and security". I have about 100 copies of the proposal in writing, and perhaps, through you, Mr. Chairman, I could prevail on the Secretariat to circulate it now, or whenever you think appropriate.

But this particular item, as formulated, is confusing, in one sense, and, in another sense, it has already been done in one context, or will be done next year in another context. We are wondering if we might not perhaps be able to do a little bit better. The idea of contemporary threats to international peace and security is quite timely, and the United States has decided views on what those are. We believe that there are a number of Governments represented in this room that feel the same way as we do, but we also recognize that there are many views on this issue across the spectrum of regions and political viewpoints. Perhaps, then, it might be time for the international community as a whole — for every Member State of the United Nations, represented within the Disarmament Commission — to consider this issue.

The United Nations — the bureaucracy, the Secretary-General, the High-level Panel, the Panel of Eminent Persons — has considered this issue, but I do not recall if the international community as a whole has actually focussed on some of these matters, taking into account the whole range of views that we, as Member States, have as to what the threats to international peace and security are in this day and age. Perhaps that would be a very healthy thing for the Disarmament Commission to do.

The Commission has been moribund for a number of years. If the Commission were to suddenly emerge from its stasis after all of this time to discuss a matter that it has already discussed and that will be discussed by another group — well, that would seem rather flat to us. If we are going to bring this operation back to life, then perhaps we should think big and try to do something on a broad basis that will make a real contribution to international peace and security, which, after all, is the goal of this body.

The United States wishes therefore to put that idea forward for consideration. As I said earlier, we have it in writing and are prepared to circulate it, either through the Secretariat or individually, as you, Mr. Chairman, direct.

The Chairman: Before I give the floor to the next speaker, I should like to suggest that if we could, as far as possible, concentrate on my proposal and use it as a basis, that would probably facilitate our work. Indeed, my proposal was not created out of thin air; it is based, generally speaking, on other proposals that were on the table, and which technically are still on the table. What I am trying to say is that representatives can make whatever proposals they want, but, just to facilitate our work, if we could try and focus on my proposal.

I know that the line between amending my proposal and offering new suggestions is very thin, but let us try, as best as possible, to focus attention on that proposal and on what parts of it could be removed or replaced, instead of considering brand-new proposals. Such proposals may be very good, but I am not sure whether they would in themselves facilitate our efforts to reach consensus. I just wanted to flag that before we proceed.

Mr. Litavrin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. Chairman, we have some comments on your proposal. We agree with its wording, but we are

willing to look at other proposed options. We also believe that it is important that the second agenda item relate to conventional weapons. If we can find some other mutually acceptable wording, that would also be good.

The Chairman: I do not want to engage in a long debate, but the United States has just said that the second item need not be on conventional weapons, and the Russian Federation has just indicated to us that it believes that the item should deal with that topic. I do not wish to prolong our work, but we have know where we stand. I should therefore like to hear comments — very brief comments — on that question before we go into the substance of my proposal, since two delegations have opposing views on whether not the second item should deal with conventional weapons. What is to be replaced by what, that is another issue. The question here is, should the second item deal with conventional weapons or not? I should like to hear representatives' comments in that respect.

Mr. Rachmianto (Indonesia): In response to your question, Mr. Chairman, I believe that the Non-Aligned Movement takes the position that the second item should relate to conventional weapons.

The Chairman: In the absence of any other comments, and going back to the reason why I chose to include the issue of conventional weapons, I think it is obvious — again, based on recommendations and suggestions already on the table — why I made the choice that the second item should relate to conventional weapons. I think that we should proceed on that basis, having taken note of the views of any delegation that believes that perhaps we should not be talking about conventional weapons in the second item.

Having concluded discussions on the issue of whether or not the item should relate to conventional weapons, let us go back to the substance of my proposal. We have taken note of the statement made by the representative of the United States. I do not want to start summarizing what delegations say, but I am leaning towards doing so, because it would seem that there is a deafening silence in this room.

The floor is open once again for comments on my proposal for the second item.

Mr. Li Song (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): As this is the first time today that the Chinese delegation has spoken before the Disarmament Commission, I should like to congratulate you on your election, Mr. Chairman, together with the other members of the Bureau. We are convinced that under your able leadership and with the support of all Commission member States, we will be able to agree as soon as possible on an agenda for the Commission's next session.

The Chinese delegation supports the Chairman's proposal for agenda item 1, on nuclear disarmament. With regard to the second agenda item, we agree that our work should be based on his proposal for that item. Therefore, we agree with the Chairman and with the representatives of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Russian Federation that the second item should concern the field of conventional weapons.

With regard to the Chairman's proposal, I should like to remind all members that the Commission began its discussion on the agenda last year; we have been working on it for a long time. I recall that during last year's deliberations, many delegations remarked on why our work had to continue in the area of confidence-building measures on the basis of the discussions that had taken place in the three previous sessions. A number of delegations stated that, on the basis of those deliberations, we should be able to make progress with regard to confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons if we made further efforts. As a result, starting from last year, the proposal for agenda item 2 emerged. I believe that that is also part of the reason for the Chairman's proposal for agenda item 2.

Concerning the inclusion of the phrase "including verification mechanisms" in the Chairman's proposal for agenda item 2, the Chinese delegation has noted that next year a group of governmental experts will address the matter of verification. Therefore, we are still considering whether it would be necessary to include the phrase "verification mechanisms" or another phrase such as "including elements of verification mechanisms". We could accept the proposal as it now reads if all of us agree to do so.

In short, the Chinese delegation is prepared to work on the basis of the Chairman's proposal and to participate actively in the discussion on agenda item 2. We hope that we will be able to reach agreement on that item as soon as possible.

Ms. Paterson (United Kingdom): First, of all, I would like to reiterate the comments that I made yesterday on behalf of the European Union (EU) in that

the proposed agenda items that are coming up for discussion may well be agreed *ad referendum*, but that is subject to the context of the wider Disarmament Commission agenda.

I now turn to the second agenda item. We would very much favour an item on conventional arms, as has been expressed by other delegations.

With regard to your own proposal, Mr. Chairman, it is true, as you have said, that it is a combination of various proposals that are on the table — a compromise. There are certain questions that we would raise about the wording of your compromise. Verification is a rather tricky idea to consider. Confidence-building measures, by their nature, are voluntary and cannot be imposed. If something is voluntary, why do we need verification, and in fact who would carry out the verification? Similarly, as other delegates have stated, confidence-building measures have been on the table for quite some time now, and perhaps it is the turn of another area be looked at.

We would respectfully remind the Chairman that a selection of proposals from last year is actually still on the table, as he indicated. One of those proposals, "Best practices and regional approaches to illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons", was put forward by the EU. Perhaps that is something that could be considered as a second agenda item.

The Chairman: We have received at least one suggestion, an amendment to my proposal submitted by the representative of China, to insert, in square brackets, the phrase "elements of" after the word "including".

Mr. Li Song (China): I am sorry to ask for the floor again. I think there might have been some misunderstanding in the process of interpretation. I did not suggest an amendment to your proposal, Mr. Chairman; I said only that the question of whether we really needed to include the element of verification in your proposal was open to further debate. Personally, I believe that since we already have another mechanism for the study of verification next year, we might not really need to include the verification element. So that is what I said earlier. I am sorry; I was not making any new proposals regarding the verification element in your proposal.

The Chairman: I thank the representative of China for his clarification. I believe that, in the light of that clarification and the statement made by the representative of the United Kingdom, we can begin by putting the word "verification" in square brackets. We may also want to put, in square brackets for now, "confidence-building measures", based on the comments made by the representative of the United States. For now, my proposal still stands, but we will put "confidence-building measures" and "verification" in square brackets.

It is my understanding that delegations have some problems, for one reason or another, with "confidence-building measures" and that others also have problems with the word "verification" in this proposal. Is my understanding correct? That is why I said that, for now, we should put in square brackets either "verification mechanisms" or just "verification".

Mr. Bravaco (United States of America): I just want to indicate that that is my feeling, only because the Disarmament Commission has handled confidence-building measures for three years, and now verification is going to be handled elsewhere.

I should like to add that, certainly, small arms have their own independent, robust United Nations process. Is there nothing novel or unique in the field of conventional arms, if that is where we want to stay, that we can focus on and which the international community is not actively working on in one form or another or has not already addressed? I do not know, but certainly I have more problems with the concept of verification in this context than I do with the concept of confidence-building measures. That is my general feeling on this.

The Chairman: Do we want to replace "confidence-building measures" with something else? If we do, what else? Do we want to keep "confidence-building measures"? I put the question to the house. What about "verification"? Taking note of the comments made by other delegations, do we include or delete "verification" and replace it with something else? The first question is that of deleting it, and the second question would be that of replacing it with something else.

Mr. Bravaco (United States of America): I would support such a move, at least as an interim step. I do not know whether we would keep "confidence-building measures", but if we kept that topic, then certainly we should divorce "verification mechanisms" from that because that formulation really seems to be a mélange

of two separate items, and "verification mechanisms" is something that is being handled elsewhere. I would favour, if we had to, keeping "confidence-building measures" and removing the concept of verification mechanisms from that.

Mr. Shloma (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): On behalf of the delegation of Belarus, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship.

The issue of confidence-building measures is a priority for us. It is extremely important because our country has an active policy of creating a belt of good-neighbourly relations around our country. Of course, we are interested in hearing opinions, experience and information with respect to that area. We therefore deem it important to maintain "confidence-building measures" in this item.

Mr. Litavrin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We, too, believe that we must keep "confidence-building measures" in the proposal, because it is a very important issue. As a compromise, however, we would not insist on retaining "verification mechanisms" in the proposal.

Mr. Rachmianto (Indonesia): I have no need to add anything on the importance of confidence-building measures. In fact, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) is a very strong supporter of its continuation; indeed, we have discussed it over the past three years and were close to achieving a consensus. It would be a good idea if we could give it another chance. In fact, NAM also has its proposal on confidence-building measures and I expect that the Chair could build on that proposal.

The Chairman: It is my feeling that we have resolved, at least in principle, one part of the problem. I gather that we are approaching consensus on keeping "practical confidence-building measures". There is a consensus also on keeping "conventional weapons". We have some problems with "verification mechanisms", so could we address that and try to get past that particular hurdle?

May I put the question directly to those delegations that have problems with "verification" whether they could come up with an alternative so we can discuss that alternative, or whether we should have it at all and just retain "practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons"? The option is, first, that, if we have problems, cannot agree or reach consensus on keeping "verification", we remove it and replace it with something else. The other alternative is that we delete reference to verification mechanisms and leave the rest of the proposal as "practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons".

Ms. Notutela (South Africa): Like the Non-Aligned Movement, my delegation and I have a problem with the inclusion of verification in your proposal. I would go along with confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. I also think that some delegations have shown some flexibility with regard to the issue of verification.

My delegation also has concerns with verification, along the lines of what the delegation of the United States has said. A process has already been put in place through the Group of Governmental Experts on the issue of verification. I would therefore not go along with the Chairman's proposal to include verification as part of the second agenda item.

Mr. Bravaco (United States of America): We would support deleting verification entirely. Verification mechanisms are established by and are attached to treaties. In this context, verification is a little bit too fluid and not precise enough. However, I do not have instructions to support revisiting the issue of practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons, because Washington is aware that in the last cycle of the Disarmament Commission that actually worked, we got very close to agreement in the working group dealing with confidence-building measures — and then, regrettably, at the last minute, there was a problem and there was no agreement.

In principle, I think that this formulation — absent verification mechanisms — is something that I could sell back home. At the moment, I do not have instructions to indicate my support for it, even as amended. But I am just wondering: if that working group were to begin work, would we just be reinventing the wheel; would we get to the point where there was no consensus, only to have the same problem we had two or three years ago? Do the problems that existed then exist now? I have a question about that. Are we going to get all the way up to agreement on formulations similar to those discussed the last time around, and then have the rug pulled out from under us two or three years hence? To go through that experience again would be most regrettable.

I think that, absent that concern, and absent verification mechanisms, this is something that I could sell in Washington, if Member States were again willing to go down the same road to discuss the same issue all over again.

The Chairman: It appears that it is the wish of the house to delete reference to verification mechanisms. There is emerging consensus on that. It also appears that there is emerging consensus for us to accept my proposal as amended, at least in principle. That proposal would read as follows: "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons". It is my understanding that there is agreement, at least in principle, on the second agenda item of our provisional agenda — and I emphasize the word provisional.

If I hear no objection, and if there are no further comments on this matter, I shall take it that, as was the case yesterday, the Commission agrees in principle, or on an *ad referendum* basis, and subject to confirmation from capitals, to have the second item on conventional weapons, as amended and as I have read out.

Ms. Paterson (United Kingdom): Listening to colleagues around the room, I note that various delegations, having been very carefully led by the Chairman towards a vision of trying to do something positive in the Disarmament Commission, have mentioned the fact that confidence-building measures have been addressed from three years ago, and we have not actually been able to make any real headway. I am not raising this matter on behalf of the European Union (EU) in terms of being negative, far from it. We will certainly take this matter back to our capitals.

But I would like to reiterate something that I proposed earlier on behalf of the EU. There is an EU proposal on the table regarding something that has not actually been addressed — namely, a proposal on small arms and light weapons — and on which a great deal of work could be done and behind which there is a great deal of good will. I wonder whether the Chairman would suggest that proposal today to colleagues, in the spirit of trying to achieve something in the Disarmament Commission and given that confidence-building measures have in the past perhaps not achieved as much as we might have wished. But I stress that this comment is made on behalf of the EU, and that I wish to be helpful and to promote things positively, as the Chairman has urged us to do.

The Chairman: I took note of the reference by the representative of the United Kingdom to illicit trafficking in weapons and so on. But I was not sure how that could be incorporated as an amendment into my proposal. That is why I asked representatives to make suggestions as to what we should put in.

I have just said that what we have just completed, at least in principle, would of course be subject to confirmation from capitals, where it would be discussed and then would come back for us to put our stamp on it, so to speak. But if members look at the proposal as amended — "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons" — they will note, I think, that it is still open. If we agree to delete the word "including", and not to list what should be included so as to keep the door open, then perhaps — and I am not certain, so members should feel free to correct me — there will be an opportunity to raise other issues dear to the hearts of delegations in terms of their policies or matters that have not yet been the subject of adequate attention on the disarmament agenda.

I apologize for not repeating myself clearly, but what we are trying to do here is to prepare a sort of broad framework. That is why I would like to commend the Commission for what we have achieved so far. We should leave the door open, but we have to have certain parameters. So what we have done here is to set those parameters. Within those parameters, if certain issues have been dealt with exhaustively and representatives feel that they constitute secondary items that are not at the top of their agendas, then that could be determined in the course of substantive discussions, where representatives would have an opportunity to concentrate on their own policy issues.

I just want us to have something, to say, "Yes, we can talk about disarmament; Yes, we have a duty to fulfil our responsibility" — rather than continuing year after year with no agenda, no agenda, no agenda. To be frank, I think that, to the outside world, and even to us, it does not make sense. It is like saying that we would close down the First Committee if it had no agenda. They have problems in Geneva, but they are still meeting. They have not resolved everything. We have to keep the door open. I therefore take good note of what the representative of the United Kingdom has said.

I am in the Commission's hands, to see whether we can read anything into the broad parameters that we

have already set. We can do that here, or we can wait until we begin discussing substantive issues, and then take a look and concentrate on our individual priorities or set the priorities for the Commission during the next three years.

Ms. Paterson (United Kingdom): With that in mind, would the Chairman be willing to indulge us with a 10-minute suspension, just to talk among delegations?

The Chairman: I am always generous. The Commission may have a 15-minute suspension. If members feel that they can discuss anything else to facilitate our work, they can by all means do so.

The meeting was suspended at 11.15 a.m. and resumed at 11.45 a.m.

The Chairman: At this point, I would like to reiterate the statement I made before I suspended the meeting, namely, that it is my understanding that this meeting of the Disarmament Commission has decided in principle — or *ad referendum* — to adopt the following text as the second agenda item of the Commission's provisional agenda: "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons".

Ms. Paterson (United Kingdom): I would again like to thank the Chairman for his help in providing us with the time to hold brief discussions.

On behalf of my colleagues in the European Union, I would like to say that we would be willing to consider favourably the Chairman's proposal for a second agenda item — *ad referendum* and as part of a package, as we made clear yesterday and earlier this morning. We would also like to express a preference to begin work on that proposal on the basis of the most recent work done, where there was agreement, because that would save us time and allow us more time to discuss issues such as revitalization.

The Chairman: Unless I hear any objection, I shall take it that the Commission agrees to adopt — *ad referendum*, or in principle — the revised version of my proposal for the Disarmament Commission's second item on its provisional agenda.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: I shall leave the commendations for a later time, and just focus on procedural matters.

At this stage, having agreed in principle to two agenda items for the provisional agenda of the Commission — one on nuclear disarmament and another on conventional disarmament — both I and the members of the Commission are interested in gauging where we go from here.

Unfortunately, the Bureau has not been fully constituted. It was my intention to discuss some of these issues with the Bureau. In fact, this morning I announced that I would like to have a meeting of the Bureau some time tomorrow. In view of the remarkable progress that we have made — and here I am not overemphasizing the word "remarkable", because we recognized the stumbling blocks that were created or that appeared on our way to consensus and were able to remove some of those impediments — we are now at least on our way to discussing issues of substance.

I would now propose that we defer discussion of the work programme and other issues related to the Commission's agenda to a new organizational meeting of the Commission to be held some time in November or December, probably immediately after the end of the work of the First Committee. In making that suggestion I of course realize that our work is not yet completed. Therefore, while we are patting ourselves on the back for what we have achieved, we know there are more problems ahead.

Therefore, if the Commission agrees, it is my humble suggestion that we postpone discussion of the work programme and other issues of the agenda until November. Of course, there will meanwhile be consultations. I will be at the fringes of the First Committee to hold discussions with regional groups or individual delegations. I hope that the Bureau will have been constituted by then. I will make use of that machinery to try to facilitate our work before the holding of the new organizational meeting of the Commission that I have proposed.

Mr. Bravaco (United States of America): I am afraid that the United States cannot agree to that proposal. Our *ad referendum* support for the formulation of agenda items 1 and 2 was contingent upon how we deal with a third very important issue within the context of agreement on the agenda, and that is the issue of the revitalization of the Disarmament Commission.

I think that the fact that no agreement or recommendations have emerged from this body over

the past five years is indicative of a need to squarely address this issue in the context of an agenda. We are here discussing other elements of the agenda, and I am afraid that the United States cannot agree to the other formulations on nuclear and conventional matters unless we also agree in some fashion to carry out an internal review of the operations of the Disarmament Commission. We feel quite strongly that that makes sense at this time in the life of the United Nations, because reform is front and centre across the entire United Nations system. The Disarmament Commission should not escape its own review. Indeed, in relation to some of the other elements of the United Nations system, the Commission is in more need of exactly that type of discussion.

That review should be part of the agenda. We are here discussing the agenda. As far as the United States is concerned, we have until 5 August to hold those discussions. I therefore think that it would not be necessary or wise to postpone this matter until November. In any case, it would not be something to which the United States could agree.

The Chairman: My proposal was that, having taken note of the other problems that we face regarding the agenda and the fact that the matter was not closed, we should defer discussion of all other issues, including the work programme, until November, at another organizational meeting.

Mr. Gala López (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): My remarks are not directed at the Chairman's question or proposal, but essentially towards the explanation put forth by the representative of the United States with regard to the issue of the Commission's working methods.

Our delegation has taken part in the informal consultations and these deliberations. At certain times we have heard the delegation of the United States insist that what took place in the Commission last year and earlier was linked to the Commission's working methods. In that regard, I would like to clearly reiterate my country's position in connection with matters pertaining to reforming the Commission and improving its working methods, et cetera.

We believe that what took place last year — and perhaps the lack of consensus on certain substantive issues — should not be linked to the working methods of a commission or any other United Nations body. Instead, it should essentially be ascribed to lack of political will or readiness to make progress on substantive matters. We think that no improvement in working methods can truly replace the political will of Member States.

Our delegation wanted to make that clear because we have noted this tendency to link certain inconvenient instances of lack of consensus to the working methods of a body, whether those of the Disarmament Commission, the First Committee or other bodies of the multilateral disarmament machinery. Our delegation believes that there are in fact other factors impacting upon the attainment of consensus. A speaker clearly referred to the case of the recent Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in particular, where there was a tendency not to respect previously concluded agreements. I believe that therein lies the key to why we cannot make progress. We should therefore not look for other explanations with regard to matters that have no connection with political will on the part of States.

Having said that, I would like to reiterate the willingness of the delegation of Cuba to continue to participate constructively in these deliberations. Like the group of Non-Aligned countries, our delegation attaches great importance to the Disarmament Commission. In the meantime, we shall continue to take part in trying to achieve consensus on the Commission's substantive agenda.

Mr. Litavrin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are trying to take a flexible approach to the organization of our tasks and are prepared to work on issues of substance, as well as on organizational issues, right up to 5 August, as planned.

We understand, however, that some delegations are perhaps not yet ready to broach the substantive work or for other reasons may wish to defer discussion of such issues until November or December. That circumstance may also need to be taken into consideration. The mere fact that we have made progress on the agenda is a success in itself and, as you have said, Sir, was quite unanticipated. I believe it is very important to consolidate that achievement and not allow ourselves to digress into pointless discussions that could disrupt our work. We would therefore be prepared to support any consensus that can be reached.

As to the issue of reforming or improving the Commission's work, I believe that the matter warrants

attention and consideration, not as a separate issue, but in the context of overall United Nations reform based on agreement between Member States and of a review of the disarmament mechanism and its adaptation to contemporary circumstances. Of course, all this deserves special thought and priority attention.

Mr. Bravaco (United States of America): I have just a few points to make.

I think that we have all been quite flexible, even in an *ad referendum* context, up to now. While we are almost there on the elements we have discussed thus far, I would like to stress again — and as you have stressed, Sir — that this is in principle an emerging consensus. This is *ad referendum*, so we are not quite there, even on the elements we have already discussed. That is point one.

Point two, on the issue of political will: I understand and respect that political will is very important. In fact, I would recall that the last time this body discussed confidence-building measures, the issue was not agreed to because political will was not evidenced by one Government in one political grouping — and not the Western Group. I therefore agree that political will is quite important for agreement to be achieved, but it is not the only element. If we can look at ways for this body to improve its methods of operation to facilitate political will, I think that that would be as important as anything else that we discuss because it would augur well for future agreements in the years ahead.

Under instructions from Washington, D.C., I have a proposal for a third working group to submit through you, Sir, to the body. I have it in writing; I have about 100 copies. I think that should cover everybody here. We can circulate it afterwards or through the Secretariat, if that is permissible to you. I will read it out. It is a proposal for United Nations Disarmament Commission agenda item 3: "Measures for improving the effectiveness of the methods of the work of the Disarmament Commission".

As I pointed out yesterday, General Assembly decision 52/492 of 1998 states that the Disarmament Commission's agenda should consist normally of two items, although the Commission is not barred — in the American reading of that decision — from having three standing working groups. Indeed, that was the Commission's tradition for many years in the past, so that is not without precedent.

I also note with respect that there is a concern about manpower issues for smaller delegations and that one of the reasons for moving away from three working groups was the issue of resource allocation. Smaller delegations had difficulty covering three meetings happening at the same time, and we respect that. For those of us who were at the recently concluded Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, we note that that particular Conference got around the manpower-allocation issue by staggering the meetings of the three main committees over the course of the exercise so that, in any given morning or afternoon meeting session, no more than two of the main committees met at the same time. I would submit that that would be a viable way for us to work here on a three-working-group system, to include a revitalization or improvement working group.

As I said, I have this in writing here. This is something that is very important to Washington, D.C. It fits into our overall strategy and objective for making the United Nations system more effective in the twenty-first century. I am under instructions to propose this. I am going to do my level best to continue to be flexible *ad referendum* and in every other way, but my hands are tied on this and I am hoping that we can continue together to find a way forward on the entire package for the agenda while we are here now, and not kick this down the road to November. I believe that we should capitalize on the success we have had so far and go just one step further and complete the journey.

Mr. Rachmianto (Indonesia): I am speaking on behalf of my own delegation.

If I may recall, in one or two informal consultations, we have discussed the possibility of addressing the improvement of the working methods of the Disarmament Commission through some kind of formula such as an exchange of views or a thematic debate, without necessarily adding a third agenda item. I believe, in that regard, that, with your expertise and experience, Sir, you can come up with and offer us a magic formula to resolve the issue.

The Chairman: I am not sure that I am a magician; I will have to go get some training for that. I need it.

Mr. Pandey (India): Since this is the first time the Indian delegation is taking the floor, let me begin

by congratulating you and your team, Sir, on assuming the responsibility of the chairmanship of the Commission.

We share the concerns of the United States that the Disarmament Commission needs to look at its working methods. Since the methods have so far been effective, we cannot accept the proposition that they have not, but there is always room for improvement. As the representative of Indonesia suggested, we can deal with that issue through general debate, in which delegations have the opportunity to raise the issue in their statements. Moreover, we can have separate meetings scheduled as a thematic debate to deal with that issue, and that should enable delegations to come to some conclusions about how and in what manner we can improve the effectiveness of the methods of the work of the Disarmament Commission.

We hope that there will be some flexibility on that issue and that we can reach some conclusion on the agenda today.

The Chairman: Let me take up the issue. I think the representative of Indonesia mentioned — and for the information of representatives who were not present at the informal discussions we had in June and July — that the issue of a third item on the agenda was discussed informally within the informal consultations, because my idea was that we should concentrate on the two items that we had with focused attention.

At the same time, I and, I think, others were receptive to discussing informally the idea of a third proposal — that is, the revitalization of the Commission. We took note of it and discussed it. As the representative of Indonesia indicated, I made a proposal, based on my feeling that there was an impasse, in the informal informals. I was suggesting a compromise. If delegations considered the issue of revitalization important and if they wanted to talk about it, but if others were opposed to the idea of having it as an agenda item, my suggestion was that we could discuss it in the general debate.

Furthermore, and again after further consultations and discussion in the fringes of informal consultations, it appeared to me that we were moving towards the idea of even having this issue discussed substantively within the work programme, without its appearing as an item on the agenda — in other words, a thematic approach. I saw this as possibly taking a cue, so to speak, from the meeting we had on small arms the other day, where considerable time was devoted to thematic issues, issues that were very important and were considered in depth. Delegations had the opportunity to express their views interactively or otherwise. This is an essential part of the reporting system process, or the work or implementation of the programme of action.

Hence, I thought that maybe the same thing could be applied in the Commission as a way out. I got the impression that that suggestion was receiving some kind of general acceptance. I was waiting to hear from a number of delegations or groups of delegations, and I took the opportunity of providing a few delegations with the outline of our work programme.

I also heard "yes, maybe we could" and "provided we devote X number of meetings". The question of equal time arose, a number of meetings for our discussion within that setting — in other words, this interactive or substantive discussion, not on the agenda item. This was what I gathered. I was hoping that it would fly and that discusstons or consultations would facilitate it before this meeting or any other meeting. However, I have not yet received any further reaction to that — I would not call it a proposal, but the idea that was being floated. I do not want to give any kind of substantive value to it, even though I think it is a good idea. It was not formal; but I think it is something that delegations want to consider.

This is the current state of the discussion. I thought I would just let the Commission know, since the representative of Indonesia brought up the subject. I did not want to raise this issue myself until it was placed before us — that is, the possibility of having a third agenda item.

Against this background, could we perhaps have further discussion or comments? The floor is open.

Mr. Li Song (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The delegates of Indonesia and India and you yourself, Mr. Chairman, have expressed some ideas. We believe they are good ideas, and we hope they will become a basis for compromise. Therefore, I support the idea you have just expressed.

At the same time, I would like to stress the question of reforming the disarmament machinery within the United Nations system; this has always been the focus of attention of all sides. In the First Committee there are specific resolutions devoted to

this question. Thus I believe that, within the framework of the Disarmament Commission, if all sides can exchange views on how the working methods of the Commission can be improved, it would be conducive to the reform of the disarmament machinery throughout the whole system.

Such an exchange of views may not necessarily take the form of an independent agenda item. Therefore I believe the idea expressed by Indonesia, India and you, Sir, is very constructive. I hope the parties concerned can give serious consideration to it.

The Chairman: Are there any other comments on the information I just communicated as to what the discussions were in the informal consultations and the fringes of the informal consultations we had in June and July?

I think we should take advantage of this opportunity. What has been happening here yesterday and today is very unusual, but I think it is important that some of our discussions have some transparency to them. Of course, we have the alternative of holding informal consultations in a small room, though some delegations or many delegations might not have the opportunity of participating. I am happy we have this opportunity for delegates to discuss these issues in a more open and transparent environment. So, even though it seems to be unprecedented — and I do not think it is — I think we should make use of it, because I think it is working.

Therefore, I would again like to hear comments on whether or not we should formalize discussion of or translate this idea, which was not mine originally, but which I proposed in the circumstances of the impasse that I saw concerning the issue of a third item. My feeling was that we were warming up to that.

Mr. Litavrin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to make a proposal, Mr. Chairman, relating to what you just said about a compromise solution. If that were in written form it could be circulated, and that would help all of us take a position. The United States delegation just circulated its proposal for a third agenda item. I believe it would be advisable to have your proposal circulated in written form as well.

Mr. Bravaco (United States of America): Mr. Chairman, your idea or notion — I will not call it a proposal — is intriguing. I have circulated our proposal for the record. I take due note of the suggestion by the representative of the Russian Federation that perhaps it might be time to see a countervailing proposal or a compromise proposal in writing from some other quarter. The United States is in your hands as to how you would like to proceed to the next step — either informals or a small group. This process is a bit messy and a bit unwieldy, but there is no doubt that it is quite democratic. So we are happy to proceed on this basis as well. We are in your hands as to what you think would be the most effective way in which to proceed.

The Chairman: Well, I am in your hands. I have taken note that, first of all, the United States has circulated its proposal for a third item. I have also taken note of the comments made as to the importance of improving the Commission's effectiveness. In addition, I have heard something to the effect that maybe we should discuss this important issue not as a formal agenda item, but separately, so to speak. That coincides with my idea, which emerged in the informal consultations, to have this discussed substantively, not as an agenda item.

I also heard the proposal from the representative of the Russian Federation that my idea should be upgraded to a written proposal. I am prepared to do that, but with the understanding that, in order to facilitate our work, perhaps there should be a moratorium on proposals for a third item, or a third item that we play around with, since the United States tabled this one, and that I will have my ideas written down, and if members agree, it could probably be discussed informally. But that does not preclude delegations or groups of delegations from discussing these issues informally.

So we now have the problem of deciding whether or not to suspend this meeting and, probably later this afternoon, when I have my proposal in writing, to discuss both proposals informally or within this meeting, transparently, with everyone here. So members should give me an idea of what they think, if we agree that those should be the two documents or papers on the table for discussion.

Mr. Rachmiarto (Indonesia): I am sorry to take the floor again, Mr. Chairman. I do not have a magic spell, but at least I believe that I have a magic wand that you can use later.

Later, we are going to adopt document A/CN.10/2005/L.56. At the same time, we will address CRP.1. So I am a bit confused about a proposal in writing

to address the issue of improving the Commission's working methods. I would suggest, instead of putting it in writing, asking the Chair to come up with a proposed programme of work. In that way, we could take on board the issue of improving the working methods and reflect it in the programme of work. I was just wondering whether or not that would be useful.

The Chairman: I thank the representative of Indonesia for his suggestion of trying to help me out with his magic wand.

When I made the proposal earlier to perhaps discuss other issues of the agenda in November, since there was obviously no consensus, I was thinking about the work programme. At this stage, even if we substantively agree on removing the *ad referendum* status from the two items, we still have to discuss the question of the chairmanships of the working groups or specialized bodies of the Commission on those two items. And if we have a third item, should we have a working group on that as well?

I did not want to go into the issue of working groups; I mentioned the question of equal time, or an equal number of meetings, devoted to the idea of revitalization only because it was discussed informally. So I would rather not discuss the work programme at this point. Let us first decide whether we must make the third item an agenda item. This says "a proposal for UNDC agenda item 3".

Most delegations are interested in reform or revitalization, as we were in the First Committee, but the difference lies in how to consider it within this context. So I think that we should first address whether or not we agree to make the third item an agenda item, taking into consideration the possibility of discussing or addressing the issue in another format to be determined by the Commission, such as my idea of having a kind of thematic discussion of this issue.

Mr. McGuire (Grenada): As this is the first time I have taken the floor, I know custom in the United Nations has it that I am to congratulate you, Sir, and your colleagues. However, after listening to the dialogue for the past two hours, I am not sure if I am to congratulate you all or to commiserate with you all — or to do both. Choose which you would like.

My delegation thinks that the proposal of the Russian Federation — that the Chairman put his ideas on paper and that we have a discussion that is as transparent as possible — is a good one. The problem, however, as I see it on listening very carefully to the soft-spoken representative of the United States, is that he is under direct instructions from Washington, D.C. Those are strong words, in my understanding, so it seems to me that the position of the United States is quite clear and quite firm.

It would be very useful, I think — certainly to my delegation and perhaps to others — to have some idea of what the representative of the United States perhaps has in mind, based on his instructions. We have heard from the representative of Cuba, for example, that the problem is not working methods but lack of political will. The United States representative responded by saying, as I recall, that an improvement in the working methods would help achieve the political will. That is a very interesting concept, and I think it would indeed be helpful to us all if the United States representative could elaborate, however briefly, on the line of thinking that he is pursuing based on his instructions from Washington, D.C.

The Chairman: It is evident that the representative of Grenada is putting a question to the representative of the United States through the Chair. I have no objection and, if the representative of the United States does not mind, he may wish to put us in an interactive mode and try to respond to or to comment on the statement made by the representative of Grenada.

Mr. Bravaco (United States of America): Very briefly and very generally, what I suggested earlier on was that, yes, a look at improving the working methods of this body could help facilitate political will. In the end, each capital will make its decisions on national security issues such as we deal with here based on its own worldview, its own threat perceptions and so on, but to the extent that this body operates in such a way that the way can be eased for consensus to be found — which is how we deal with those matters, especially national security matters — I think it is high time for the States members of the Disarmament Commission to have a full and frank exchange of views and bring to the table their own thoughts, in a very interactive way in a formal setting, on ways that we can do our work better, improving the modus operandi of this body, much in the same way that the United States has suggested successfully that the First Committee of the General Assembly take a look at its improvement methods.

I would also add that, while this was an American idea, for the last two years our collective efforts in the First Committee have enjoyed a broad and deep consensus. We have worked very closely with all delegations to come up with what the United States thinks — at least in the context of the First Committee — is something of real and lasting value and that will allow us to move forward, smarter and better, in that body in the years ahead. We think that a similar discussion of measures to improve our operations here would be a healthy and useful thing.

I do not want to tip the American hand as to what ideas we may have to suggest now. I would like to cross that bridge when we come to it, but certainly we think it would be of use. There is a precedent for success, at least as we look at the First Committee, and we would like to have similar, broad discussions here in this body.

I hope that helps to clarify things a bit for the representative of Grenada.

Mr. McGuire (Grenada): Let me respond very briefly. I realize that, among the great Powers — especially those with nuclear arsenals — Grenada is merely a mouse moving between the legs of mighty elephants, but what the United States representative just said about having a frank discussion about worldviews held by Governments is indeed a weighty matter. From our position looking up at those mighty elephants and their enormous legs, that is very heavy stuff indeed. I do wonder whether we are prepared and capable, at our pay grades, of having a frank discussion about worldviews. Would that not mean that we would have to have here people from capitals who would engage in such discussion at a high level indeed?

Mrs. Maierá (Brazil): I would like to thank you for your efforts, Sir, and all the delegations that have expressed their flexibility, which has allowed us to arrive at the good point of discussions in which we find ourselves.

Regarding the methods of work, my delegation believes that it is always useful to any body to review its methods of work, because, as the representative of India said, there is always room for improvement.

My delegation is also under very clear and very firm instructions from our capital and we would be very happy to discuss the methods of work of the Disarmament Commission, but not as a third item. That is why we agree with your ideas, Sir.

Mr. Gala López (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): It seems to us that we have two substantive issues on which there is virtual agreement, and we feel that our Commission's debate should be focused on those. Clearly, no delegation has a problem with exchanging views on the reform of the United Nations. That is what we are all doing, but in our view that should not be a determining factor for the Commission's entire substantive agenda.

Some interesting proposals have been put forward by certain delegations on how, within our format, we can exchange views on items relating to the improvement of the Commission's working methods. It also seems to us that the Commission and other United Nations disarmament forums have discussed ways to improve their working methods. In essence, we do not feel that such discussion has really enabled us, for example, to make progress in the elimination of nuclear weapons or to reach truly radical agreements in that field.

All of that is to say that we should like to know how flexible the delegation that is proposing a third agenda item is prepared to be on how its proposal can be implemented. We have heard from some delegations that are opposed to the inclusion of a third agenda item. Among the issues covered by that position is the fact that not all member States at the most recent session of the First Committee were in favour of resolution 59/105, which clearly established that the Commission should consider two topics on its agenda this year. That must also be taken into account if we want to include a third item on the substantive agenda.

We all agreed that, at this substantive session, we would consider two items on the agenda. Thus, although the issue of revitalization may be referred to, I do not feel that it enjoys the same relevance as the substantive items on which we have just agreed *ad referendum*. That is where we should focus the attention of our Commission.

Mr. Andereya (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Since this is the first time I am taking the floor, I should like to congratulate you, Sir, not only on assuming your important functions, but also on the successes you have achieved over the past two days. Those successes were unhoped for, at least by my delegation.

With regard to the idea of including on the agenda a third item on improving the effectiveness of the working methods of the Commission, my

delegation would agree to discuss it. We feel that now is the appropriate time for such discussion in the context of the reform of the United Nations system. I do not believe that anybody would object to holding a discussion or debate on that subject.

There seems to be a lack of clarity, however, in how to address the matter. My delegation feels that, at this level, trying to identify a third item would require a great deal of time. It would exhaust a lot of resources for highly uncertain end results. I do feel, however, that we could have a serious and in-depth debate on the topic within the context of the general debate or perhaps during a thematic debate such as that to which you referred, Sir, held during the United Nations Second Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

What is important to my delegation is the substance of the matter. We must be able to address that substance broadly and in depth. We should not concern ourselves about whether or not it is an agenda item; our concern should be the result of the debate.

The Chairman: We have the proposal of the United States, and the representative of the Russian Federation has suggested that I put my proposal in writing. I agree to do that, and I think it will lay it out exactly so that we can know what we are talking about. If I do so, I will not specify the number of meetings that will be devoted to the issue. That will have to be discussed. I need to have representatives' input, and allocation of time to the issues or the agenda items could be discussed in an organizational setting.

Having listened to the discussion — and, as I said, I am prepared to put my idea in writing — I wonder whether the United States would be prepared to consider the possibility of having the Commission discuss in depth the issue of revitalization or improving the effectiveness of the Commission during discussion of the issue separately, and not as an agenda item. In other words, we would devote equitable, though not necessarily equal time — as I said, we will determine the length of time later on — to that issue, because every representative who has spoken so far has given the indication that it is important for us to talk about it.

In short, would the United States consider having us discuss the content of its proposal for a third item substantially and in detail in a number of meetings of the Commission and not as an agenda item?

Mr. Bravaco (United States of America): As I said earlier, Sir, I found your idea intriguing. To key off the Russian Federation, it would be useful, I think, for all of us to see something in writing. The idea of a working group on this matter, which is important to the United States, is something that I would be loathe to drop, as it is something that I have been instructed to propose.

The twin, equally important issue for the United States is equal time. To add another point, however — and maybe this will help — from the United States perspective, I do not think that the issue of the revitalization of the Disarmament Commission necessarily warrants three-year consideration. We proposed a working group here on that very issue, and if a third working group were agreed to, it necessarily follows that it would receive the same amount of time over the same issue cycle as the other two working groups.

From the American perspective, however, we think that a working group could discuss that fully and come up with some recommendations on the matter in one session. That would leave the other two working groups to operate for the remainder of the two years in the issue cycle. At that point, the United States would strongly consider the extension of the nuclear and conventional items, depending on the progress being made on those. So equal time is important, and a working group is important to us. But we certainly think that this issue could be dispensed with after broad discussions in one session.

So I hope that that helps a little bit, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to seeing your ideas on paper.

The Chairman: I think the representative of the United States emphasized the words "equal time" and "working group". I took note of that. I did mention earlier that we could discuss the idea of a working group, who was going to chair it, et cetera, later. But first, my question was whether or not the representative of the United States would be amenable to the idea of not having this issue as an agenda item, that it could be discussed in detail. As to whether that would be done in plenary meeting or within a working group, I believe we can get to that point. That would be another level of discussion.

So, just to facilitate our work and in the interests of conciliation, having heard the views of other delegations and in order to enable us to arrive at a consensus, can the representative of the United States let us know whether or not he is amenable to the idea of not having it as an item on the agenda? That would help me in reformulating or drafting my idea, which I believe I must circulate to everyone so that we are all aware of it.

Mr. Bravaco (United States of America): Theoretically, if there were a third working group, then it would have to be expressed in the context of the agenda. That seems to make perfect sense to me. If there were not a third working group, I would feel very strongly that the decision that we take here — the package — should express in some way that an additional agreement has been reached on the idea of having some other formulation to discuss revitalization. So, in other words, maybe it should not be part of the agenda as such, but certainly some sort of statement appended or attached to the agreement on the formation of what would be the two working groups. I am just speaking off the top of my head here; I have no instructions on this.

The Chairman: I thought we should postpone discussion of the issue of the cycle, et cetera, et cetera. I do not want to address the cycle; I think you will agree with me that we can leave that alone for the time being.

The idea of a working group could emerge from a decision as to whether we set up a working group on the basis of an agenda item. In other words, the representative of the United States has to tell us now whether he is amenable to having it discussed in plenary meeting or in a separate group. So, first of all, if he will let us know whether he agrees, as a compromise, not to have it as an agenda item — let us get that clear — or give an indication as to his feeling about that, then we will move to the next: well, he wants a working group on it; that will be discussed. In other words, the platform on which the issue is going to be discussed will be determined later. So if he could throw some light on this idea concerning the agenda, that would help me to prepare the note that I am supposed to prepare about it.

I have just been told that we have only five minutes left.

Mr. Bravaco (United States of America): I will be as brief as I possibly can. I am rather limited in what I can agree to at this point, absent an alternative to propose to Washington. I have my instructions right in front of me. The topic heading is "Equal treatment of agenda items", and under that subheading I am instructed to propose what I have proposed regarding improvement. So I do not feel comfortable signalling that I can offer you a compromise without something that I could send home to Washington explaining that it had come back from Member States and the Chair as what they believed to be a viable alternative, and that I could propose to recommend or not. So if I could see something in writing first, I think that that would help me and a number of others.

The Chairman: Let me give a preview, if I may do so. The representative of the United States spoke about equal time and then about equal treatment. I think that he has helped me, in a way, to reformulate my ideas. So — this is off the top of my head — I may discuss equitable treatment of all issues, meaning revitalization and the two agenda items. I will throw that to the house. How it would be translated in terms of the time factor, the allocation of time, would have to be determined.

But the idea that I would propose as a working premise is that we not have a third agenda item, that the issue of revitalizing the Commission's working methods be discussed in detail and that it receive equitable treatment with that of other issues on the provisional agenda of the Commission. Then, as I said, we will look at the whole work programme, the number of meetings and how we will allocate them. We will cross that bridge when we come to it. So if we agree, my idea or proposal will reflect this, and I am going to use the term "equitable treatment".

Mr. Bravaco (United States of America): I think that that is probably a good direction to go. I just have a question: if equitable treatment does not mean equitable apportionment of meeting time for the purposes of organizing the session, then what does it mean? I am a little confused on that point.

The Chairman: In the media, the concept of equal time is interpreted in so many ways; ask the Federal Communications Commission. I have a background in communication as well. The representative of the United States mentioned equal time and then talked about equal treatment, and I picked up the word "treatment". So at this stage, I cannot prejudge. As I said, we will interpret equitable

treatment later, in terms of the number of meetings that we assign to the issue.

So I will translate my ideas into a proposal. Maybe we can communicate that to delegations today so that, tomorrow morning, we can at least temporarily clear that other hurdle and see where we proceed from there.

Let me just announce that I have received word from the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States that Ms. María Alicia Terrazas Ontiveros of Bolivia and Mrs. Janice Miller of Jamaica have been nominated as Vice-Chairpersons of the Commission.

If there is no objection, may I take it that those two representatives are duly elected as Vice-Chairpersons and will join me in the meeting of the Bureau tomorrow?

It was so decided.

The Chairman: We will meet tomorrow, and I hope that by then representatives will have received copies of my proposal. As I said, members should not expect me to deal with the number of meetings. I will not go into that at this stage.

The meeting was suspended at 1 p.m.